

# Connecticut Disability Advocacy Collaborative

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**“Enhancing the effectiveness of disability activism by organizing and empowering individuals, families, groups and organizations”**

Testimony before the Housing Committee

1:00 pm

Thursday, March 4, 2010

Good afternoon. My name is Stan Kosloski and I am the Executive Director of the CT Disability Advocacy Collaborative. For twenty five years I served as Assistant Director of the Office of Protection and Advocacy for Persons with Disabilities, where I had extensive experience with the State Building Code. I also served as State ADA Coordinator during the Weicker administration.

I am here today to provide my full support to HB 5372, and would like to first thank Rep. Green for his commitment to increasing housing opportunities for individuals with disabilities and elders. The proposal before you today is forward thinking and far reaching, and will provide benefits to thousands of individuals with mobility limitations for many years to come, those currently without disabilities now as well as those that do.

The intent of this bill is to encourage the development of single family and two-family homes that are “visitable” by individuals with mobility limitations. This is new territory for those of us in the advocacy world, but the objectives are simple. There are three items that we seek to encourage:

- One zero step entrance (could be at front, side or rear of house, or through garage)
- Doorways that are 32” clear and 42” hallways
- One bath on the main floor (could be a half bath) with sufficient room for a wheelchair

I would like to make one suggestion and raise one concern.

The term “accessible” is used in the proposal before you, and accessible homes, while welcomed, go beyond what we are seeking. In fact, encouraging accessible homes may prove harmful to the objective since accessible single family homes (e.g., fully accessible kitchens and bathrooms with grab bars, cut outs under sinks, lowered counters, etc.) are not likely to be in great demand, whereas visitable

**Contact:**

**Stan Kosloski**  
7 Shadow Lane  
Cromwell, CT 06416  
[stankosloski@att.net](mailto:stankosloski@att.net)  
860-614-8351

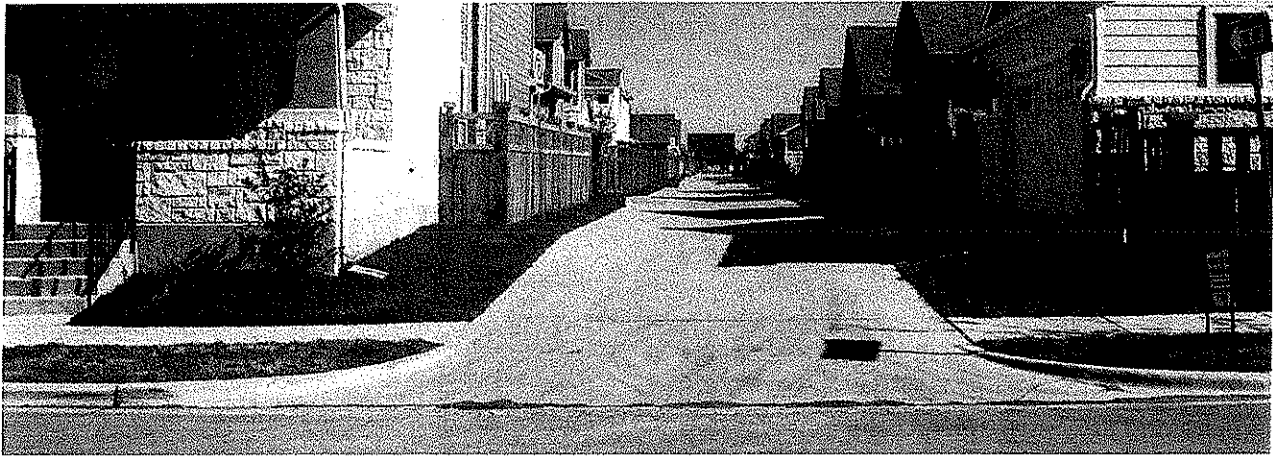
homes, with the three adaptations I have mentioned that are often invisible, will prove more desirable.

There is a national standard – referred to as ICC/ANSI A117.1 – that is used by many states, including CT, as a basis for its Building Code. ICC/ANSI recently added a Type C dwelling unit to its housing section. Type C homes are visitable homes, and I brought copies of a summary of Type C guidelines for the committee to review. My recommendation would be to reference the ICC/ANSI Type C standard in the legislation you are considering.

The concern I have is this: multi-family units are included in the proposed legislation. Degrees of accessibility in multi-family units are already required under our Building Code. It does not seem necessary, and may prove counter-productive, to provide incentives for constructing housing that is already required to be accessible.

To wrap up: incorporating incentives for builders to construct visitable single and two family homes will enable elders to stay in their own home if they develop mobility limitations as they age; will increase the housing stock that has at least a minimum degree of accessibility; will allow individuals with mobility disabilities to visit the homes of family or friends, decreasing social isolation; and will enable those who become patients in nursing facilities or rehab hospitals to return home when they are able.

Thank you.



ALLEY PROVIDES REAR OR SIDE ENTRY

## Visitability Standards

The rest of this booklet provides a summary of the requirements for visitable dwelling units in ICC/ANSI A117.1 (2009). The ICC/ANSI A117.1 Standard on Accessible and Usable Buildings and Facilities is the consensus standard in the U.S. for defining the details of accessible construction and is referenced by most building codes in the country. In 2008 the ICC committee that develops the A117 Standard developed a new section with technical design criteria for visitability based on a document developed by disability rights advocates for the Inclusive Home Design Act. Referred to as Type C units, the section can be referenced by future visitability laws and programs, thus promoting uniformity and aiding in their interpretation.

Since the standards are developed for use in a legal context, they include many provisions that heretofore have not been included in previous visitability laws to address potential problems with enforcement. For example, one of the issues that needed to be addressed was to clarify what minimum facilities in the home have to be on the accessible level, e.g. kitchen equipment, amount of living space, etc.

This document includes a summary of the Type C (visitable) requirements. Numbers following headings correspond to sections in the standard. Please note that the requirements of the standard are simplified here to provide a concise and easy to understand list of features. In particular, only the key cross-references to other parts of the Standard have been included. Consult the Standard for the actual wording and more detailed information\*.

\* Note: The IDEA Center does not warrant the completeness or accuracy of this document nor how it may be interpreted by building or planning officials.

## ICC Type C Units

While the concept of visitability puts a high priority on a zero step entrance, wide interior clearances, and an accessible bathroom, most visitability laws have included a few additional features. Similarly, the Type C units contain technical criteria for six features: no-step entrances, wider doorways, access to a half-bath on the main floor, reinforcement in bathroom walls for future grab bar installation, maneuvering space in food preparation facilities if provided on the floor served by the zero step entrance, and light switches and electrical outlets within comfortable reach for all.

## Unit Entrance (1006.2)

At least one unit entrance shall be on a circulation path complying with Section 1006.5 (Circulation Path) from a public street or sidewalk, a dwelling unit driveway, or a garage.

## Connected & Interior Spaces (1006.3 & 1006.4)

A circulation path complying with Section 1006.5 (Circulation Path) shall connect the unit entrance located on the circulation path to the following spaces:

- An entrance level toilet room or bathroom complying with Section 1006.6 (Toilet Room or Bathroom).
- One additional habitable space with an area 70 square feet [6.5 sq. m] minimum.
- When provided on the entrance level, a food preparation area complying with Section 1006.7 (Food Preparation Areas).

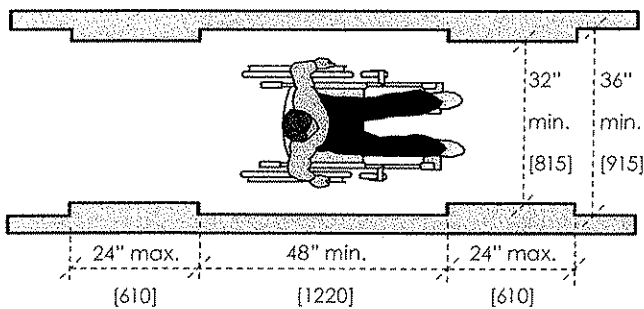
*Exception: A toilet room or bathroom shall not be required in units with less than 120 square feet [11 sq. m] of habitable space on the entrance level.*

## Circulation Path (1006.5)

**Components (1006.5.1):** The circulation path shall include one or more of the following elements: Walking surfaces with a slope not steeper than 1:20, doors and doorways, ramps, compliant elevators (Section 407-409), and compliant platform lifts (Section 410).

**Walking Surfaces (1006.5.2) and Thresholds (1006.5.3.2):** Thresholds and slopes not steeper than 1:20 shall comply with Section 303 (Changes in Level). Section 303.2 permits abrupt changes in level up to ¼ in. [6.4 mm]. Section 303.3 states, "Changes in level greater than ¼ in. [6.4 mm] in height and less than ½ in. [13 mm] maximum in height shall be beveled with a slope no greater than 1:2. Changes in level greater than ½ in. [13 mm] in height shall be ramped and comply with Section 405 (Ramps) or 406 (Curb Ramps)."

*Exception: Thresholds at exterior sliding doors shall be permitted to be ¾ inch [19 mm] maximum in height, provided they are beveled with a slope not steeper than 1:2.*



WALKING SURFACES CLEAR WIDTH

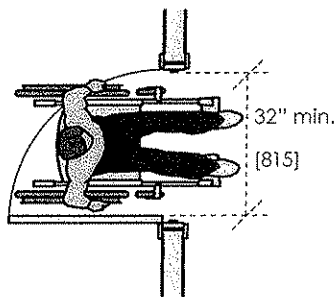
Hallways and corridors are at least 36 in. clear with allowable pinch points of 32 in. clear width for no longer than 24 inches.

**Clear Width (1006.5.2.1):** The clear width of the circulation path shall comply with Section 403.5 (Clear Width) which states, hallways and corridors must have at least 36 in. [915 mm] clear width.

*Exception: Pinch points (short, narrower areas) are allowed to be 32 in. [815 mm] clear for a distance of 24 in. [610 mm] maximum (see figure).*

**Doors and Doorways (1006.5.3.1):** Swinging doors shall have a clear opening of 31 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> in. [810 mm] minimum measured from the jamb to the inside face of the door and stop with the door open at 90 degrees. Sliding and folding doors shall be measured from the jamb to the inside edge of the door in the open position. Automated doors may be used if they meet all applicable code requirements, including the requirements in ICC/ANSI A117.1.

*Exception: Doorways to closets with 15 SF [1.4 sq. m] space maximum.*



VISITABLE HINGED DOOR

Hinged doors – 31 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> in. min. clear width measured from the jamb to the inside face of the door when held open at 90 degrees.

**Ramps (1006.5.4):** Ramps shall comply with Section 405 (Ramps).

*Exception: Handrails, intermediate landings and edge protection are not required where the sides of ramp runs have a vertical drop-off of 1/2 inch [13 mm] maximum within 10 inches [255 mm] horizontally of a ramp run.*

## Toilet Room or Bathroom (1006.6)

Toilet rooms or bathrooms covered by Section 1006.4 (Interior Spaces) shall include the following features:

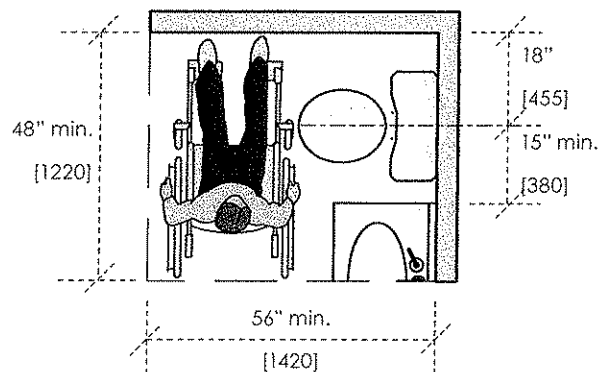
- A lavatory and a toilet.
- Reinforcement and space clearances for the future installation of grab bars at toilets.

*Note: If more than one bathroom is provided on the entry floor, reinforcement is required in at least one full bathroom on that floor.*

- The wall reinforced for the future installation of grab bars shall be 18 inches [455 mm] from the centerline of the toilet.
- Lavatories must be at least 15 inches [380 mm] from the centerline of the toilet.
- Space clearances at the toilet must meet or exceed the minimum requirements for at least one of the following sections:

### “Parallel Approach” (1004.11.3.1.2.1):

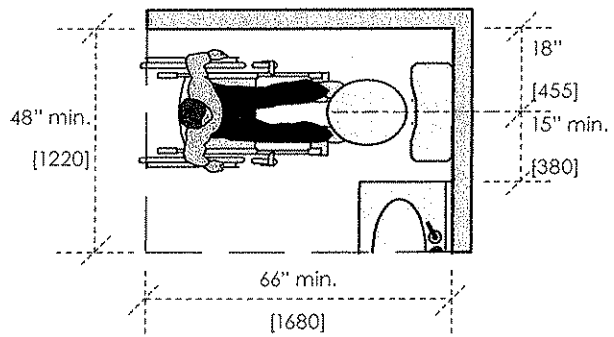
- Measured from the wall behind the toilet, there shall be a minimum clear space of 56 inches [1420 mm].
- Measured from the wall designated for the future installation of grab bars, there shall be a minimum clear space of 48 inches [1220 mm].
- Vanities or lavatories beside the toilet may overlap required space clearances.



PARALLEL APPROACH

**“Forward Approach” (1004.11.3.1.2.2):**

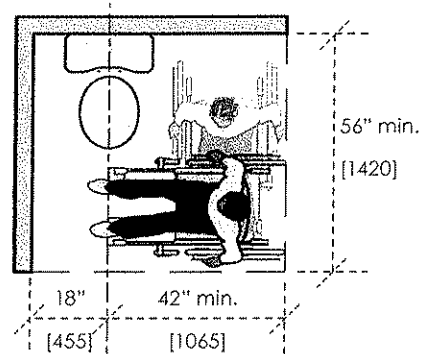
- i. Measured from the wall behind the toilet, there shall be a minimum clear space of 66 inches [1680 mm].
- ii. Measured from the wall designated for the future installation of grab bars, there shall be a minimum clear space of 48 inches [1220 mm].
- iii. Vanities or lavatories beside the toilet may overlap required space clearances.



FORWARD APPROACH

**“Parallel or Forward Approach” (1004.11.3.1.2.3):**

- i. Measured from the wall behind the toilet, there shall be a minimum clear space of 56 inches [1420 mm].
- ii. Measured from the centerline of the toilet, there shall be a minimum clear space of 42 inches [1065 mm].



PARALLEL OR FORWARD APPROACH

**Food Preparation Areas (1006.7)**

- a. When provided on the entrance level, the food preparation area shall include a sink, a cooking appliance, and a refrigerator.
- b. Clearances between all opposing base cabinets, counter tops, appliances or walls within the food preparation area shall be 40 inches [1015 mm] minimum.

*Exception: Spaces that do not have a cook-top or conventional range shall be permitted to have a minimum clearance of 36 inches [915 mm] wide.*

**Lighting Controls & Receptacle Outlets (1006.8)**

The centerline of receptacle outlets and operable parts of lighting controls located a minimum of 15 inches [380 mm] and a maximum of 48 inches [1220 mm] above the finished floor.

*Exception: The following shall not be required to comply with Section 1006.8:*

1. Receptacle outlets serving a dedicated use (e.g. outlets intended for refrigerators or laundry equipment).
2. Controls mounted on ceiling fans and ceiling lights
3. Floor receptacle outlets
4. Lighting controls and receptacle outlets over countertops

This booklet includes excerpts from the forthcoming book:

## **Inclusive Housing: A Pattern Book** by Edward Steinfeld & Jonathan White

This book is a resource for designing communities to accommodate social diversity and provide equitable opportunities for all residents, or, inclusive design. It focuses on design of housing to provide accessibility to people with disabilities and, aging in place, while increasing convenience and safety for all residents. This book is one small effort toward affecting a change in design practices. This is the heart of the inclusive design idea – to transform the perception of difference as something about “them” to an understanding that design for diversity benefits all of us.

***Inclusive Housing: A Pattern Book* will be available for purchase in Fall of 2009. Watch our website for an announcement on the exact release date.**

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**Concrete Change** is the organization that brought the concept of visitability to the U.S. and assists communities and professionals seeking to introduce visitability laws. For additional information on visitability, see Concrete Change at [www.concretechange.org](http://www.concretechange.org) or call +1 (404) 378.7455.

**The American Association of Retired People (AARP)** has taken a leadership role in promoting design for aging in place. They recently published a white paper on visitability, written by the IDEA Center and Concrete Change available at [http://www.aarp.org/research/housing-mobility/accessibility/2008\\_14\\_access.html](http://www.aarp.org/research/housing-mobility/accessibility/2008_14_access.html). See [www.aarp.org/research/housing-mobility](http://www.aarp.org/research/housing-mobility), or call +1 (888) OUR.AARP.

**The Inclusive Home Design Act** (H.R. 1408) was re-introduced to Congress by Rep. Jan Schakowsky (D-IL) in March 2009 and is supported by many members of Congress. For new homes built with federal assistance, the Act would supplement the existing required percentage of fully accessible units with visitability in all the other units. For the latest information on the bill's progress, please contact Rep. Schakowsky's Communications Director, Trevor Kincaid, at +1 (202) 226.6898.



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**Center for Inclusive Design &  
Environmental Access**  
378 Hayes Hall, University at Buffalo  
3435 Main Street  
Buffalo, NY 14214-3087

TEL: +1 (716) 829.3485 x 329  
TTY: +1 (716) 829.3758  
Fax: +1 (716) 829.3861  
Email: [idea@ap.buffalo.edu](mailto:idea@ap.buffalo.edu)  
Web: [www.ap.buffalo.edu/idea](http://www.ap.buffalo.edu/idea)

